



"With years of solid reform work under our belts, we're optimistic that the U.S. Department of Education will view Tennessee in the same way we see ourselves: As a state that is ready to lead the nation with fresh ideas and a new approach to public education."
Outgoing Governor Phil Bredesen, January 20, 2010

POSITION: Superintendent, Achievement School District
LOCATION: Nashville, TN
REPORTS TO: Tennessee State Commissioner of Education

Overview of the Role

The founding Superintendent of the Tennessee Achievement School District will lead the development and operations of a new, stand-alone unit of the Tennessee Department of Education. Primarily, the Superintendent will develop and execute on the Tennessee's strategy to take over and dramatically improve the performance of the State's most underperforming schools. S/he will have the authority and responsibility for the operations and performance of the schools in the Achievement School District. S/he will also serve as a member of the Tennessee Department of Education's Senior Executive team, contributing to key strategic decisions for the organization.

Overview of the Organization

In January 2010 the Tennessee legislature enacted the ***Tennessee First to the Top Act*** – the most sweeping education law passed in Tennessee in over two decades. Among the most notable components of this new, bi-partisan legislation was the creation of **The Achievement School District** ("ASD" or "the district"), a wholly new division of the State's Department of Education. The ASD is a key component of Tennessee's strategy to address the persistently poor performance of many of its schools. Modeled after the Recovery School District in Louisiana, which took over the vast majority of poor performing schools in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, the ASD has the ability to take over and operate persistently poor performing schools and TN Local Education Agencies (LEAs) across the state.

Further confirmation – and affirmation – of Tennessee's bold vision for reforming public education for its schoolchildren has followed in the form of two substantial federal grants. First, in March 2010, Tennessee was named as one of only two states to receive a grant award in the first round of the federal ***Race to the Top*** competition. Notably, the state was awarded its full \$500M request. Next, in August and in partnership with Louisiana's Recovery School District and New Schools For New Orleans, Tennessee's Department of Education was awarded \$30M in a highly competitive federal grant program designed to support and expand high-quality charter schools. Almost \$3M from the award will go directly to the ASD and over \$5M will be allocated for new charter schools in Tennessee (particularly in Memphis and Nashville). The grant was awarded as part of the ***Investing in Innovation*** program, commonly referred to as i3, which is designed to support the nation's boldest reform plans.

Fueled by these historic developments, the ASD is a high-profile, critical component of Tennessee’s ambitious plan to dramatically transform education across the state and senior state officials are looking for a unique leader to drive and carry out this vision.

Status of ASD as of November 2010

Since winning the ***Race to the Top*** award in March 2010, the Tennessee Department of Education has been moving ahead with its ambitious reform agenda. Year 1 of the grant was designated as a planning year for the ASD and one in which low performing schools and LEAs are being assessed for entry into the new District. Meanwhile, with the election of a new Governor on November 2, 2010, the state leadership is embarking on its formal transition which will include the appointment of a new Commissioner of Education.

ASD Design

The primary functions of the ASD fall into five categories: oversight, facilitation, human capital, operations and support. Below is a table that shows the kinds of activities that fall under each category. This list is not exhaustive, but is meant to illustrate the ASD’s main oversight and facilitation functions (occurring at the state-level) and human capital, operations, and support functions (at the school level).

State Level		School Level		
Oversight	Facilitation	Human capital	Operations	Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify schools to enter the ASD Select intervention strategies (turnaround, restart, charter, closure) Hold all schools accountable for results and, when necessary, for compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiate contracts with districts for continued operation of ASD-eligible schools Develop policy Oversee public affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify candidates to serve in ASD schools Place qualified candidates Employ teachers and leaders who work in ASD schools Administer HR programs Oversee performance management systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation Food services Technology Maintenance Purchasing Etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional services Professional development Grants administration Etc.

Schools that are eligible for the ASD have either reached the “Restructuring 2” phase (the fifth year of improvement status) pursuant to the State’s accountability system, or they are Title I schools that meet the U.S. Department of Education’s definition of “persistently lowest achieving schools.” Based on current AYP calculations, there are currently 13 schools that are eligible to be part of the ASD. Ten of the schools are categorized as the persistently lowest-achieving schools in the state and the other three schools are in Restructuring 2 and beyond under No Child Left Behind designations. The schools are located in five Tennessee districts, including: Madison County (Jackson), Hamilton County (Chattanooga), Knox County (Knoxville), Memphis, and Metro Nashville. The 13 eligible schools include approximately 10,000 students.

Tennessee already has secured commitments from five leading superintendents from across the state – the Coalition of Large School Systems (CLASS) – to serve as a unique association ready to partner with the state for bold reforms, including the ASD. These leaders, who are committed to dramatic reform and capacity-building in their home districts, will play an important role in ensuring local support, collaboration, and local buy-in for transformational education improvement. In fact, 12 of the 13 schools in the ASD are in CLASS districts, and their superintendents have endorsed the ASD.

Once it has taken over a school or LEA, the ASD has the authority to either 1) operate the school under very different conditions or 2) contract out the operations of the school to individuals, governmental entities or non-profits to manage the day to day operations of the school(s). Once a school is a part of the ASD, the school will remain in the district for at least five years.

The role of teachers/staff and LEAs

Teachers and staff who choose to accept the offer to work at the ASD will also, as part of that choice, relinquish their rights and obligations under their previous contract with the LEA, and assume new rights and obligations under the terms of a new contract with the ASD.

School Governance in the ASD

Currently, schools slated to enter the ASD will operate under three types of governance structures, comprising a “portfolio” approach. The ASD’s relationship with schools will differ, depending on their governing arrangement, as listed below:

- *Direct-Run Schools:* schools that the ASD operates directly, using a small central school operations team combined with talent pipelines of Teach For America, The New Teacher Project, and other nationally-recognized groups. The ASD will be responsible for oversight, accountability, and school-level support in these schools. Operations support (transportation, food services, etc.) will likely be supplied through contracts with schools’ home districts.
- *LEA Contract Schools:* schools that are contracted back to their home district, under dramatically different operating conditions including school-level authority over people, time and budget, and extensive waivers from state and local policies. The ASD will be responsible for oversight and accountability for these schools, and for ensuring that the districts adhere to the terms of their contract. Operations and interventions will be carried out by the home district.
- *Chartered Schools:* high-performing charter schools or charter management organizations (CMOs) that replace or transform ASD-eligible schools. As with contract schools, the ASD will be responsible for oversight and accountability for these schools. Operations will be carried out by the school operator or the CMO.

Partnerships and the ASD

Tennessee will leverage the expertise of an unprecedented set of non-profit organizations – each with a robust track record of providing highly effective teachers and leaders, creating new charter schools, and revamping dysfunctional human capital systems – and deploy them in the ASD and other schools. These data-focused and results-oriented groups will provide specific technical assistance to educators, train regional delivery staff and develop Tennessee-specific products and interfaces that will long outlive the ***Race to the Top*** grant award. Potential partners include, but are not limited to, Teach For America, The New Teacher Project, KIPP and the Charter School Growth Fund. The ASD will benefit directly from other Race to the Top contracts such as Battelle for Kids and Urban Leadership Development.

ASD and Accountability

The ASD will set individual academic goals for each of the schools in the district and will collaborate with partners to hold them accountable for meeting the pre-established statewide metrics. After the second year of operation in the ASD, the Commissioner and the Superintendent will assess the school's progress and begin a process of planning for transitioning that school that will include either transitioning it back to the district at the five-year mark, chartering (or continuing a charter), or closing it. The transition plan will guide years three through five of the school's life in the ASD. During the initial five-year period of the ASD, the TN Department of Education will use existing resources to work closely with each school's home LEA to build capacity so that achievement gains are not reversed when the school returns. As a result, a "dotted line" association will be maintained between the school and its current central office, although the ASD will have ultimate oversight.

Key Information on K-12 Education in the State of Tennessee

- Approximately 940,000 Students in Tennessee
- 136 school districts and 4 special schools
 - Memphis City Schools – 105,000 students
 - Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools – 71,000 students
 - Knox County Public Schools – 54,000 students
 - Shelby County Public Schools – 46,000 students
 - Hamilton County Public Schools – 39,000 students
- Approximately \$3.6 billion annual spending on education
 - Approximately \$8,500 per pupil
- 68 percent White, 24 percent African American, 5 percent Hispanic, 3.5 percent ELL, 58 percent economically disadvantaged, 41 percent Title I, 14.5 percent students with disabilities

Duties and Responsibilities of the ASD Superintendent

Specific responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Developing the ASD structure and strategy to ensure that the ASD and the TN Department of Education have the capacity to take over and manage multiple poor performing schools across the state;
- Working closely with national and local third-party partners to implement dramatic changes designed to enable all students to succeed in the schools that the ASD takes over, particularly in the areas of human capital;
- Partnering with the superintendents and school boards to optimize school transformation and ensure a smooth transition for students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders;
- Coordinating ASD relationships across the TN Department of Education and state government;
- Managing the performance of all the ASD schools, including hiring and firing school leaders as well as third party partners as part of a "managed portfolio" approach to transforming schools; and
- Ensuring the existence of strong social-emotional support systems, including wrap-around services for students and their families, to address out-of-school factors impacting student achievement in ASD schools and strong parent and community support systems.

Requisite Experience of the ASD Superintendent

This position offers an unprecedented opportunity for an innovative leader to lead the design and implementation of a new, virtual, statewide school district focused on school transformations. Therefore, first and foremost, the Superintendent must possess an uncompromising belief in both the capacity of all children to learn and be successful and a deep commitment to the improvement of public education in low-income communities. Almost equally as important, the Superintendent will have a demonstrable track record for producing results in a context relevant to that of ASD schools and a professional background including credentials and experiences that will validate their stated readiness to manage a bold initiative in the face of one of the most complex challenges in education reform to date.

Additionally, candidates for the position *must* possess the following skills and qualifications:

- Competencies critical to success in a turnaround school environment, specifically:
 - unwavering orientation to accountability and results;
 - appetite for action, impact and influence;
 - tested management and development of high performing teams measured against performance benchmarks and outcomes; and
 - proven strategic planning experience and problem solving skills.
- Professional experience as a leader or as part of a leadership team in a school or education management organization that has demonstrated success – or significant improvement – in a high poverty environment;
- Leadership experience in educational administration, management, and school planning, particularly through organizational change and/or growth;
- Proven ability to prioritize, balance, and complete multiple complex projects across multiple sites simultaneously and in the face of competing deadlines;
- Superb grassroots skills including the personal presence and communication skills necessary to effectively develop relationships, interact and convey ideas and positions to numerous audiences including legislators, superintendents, funders, principals, community groups, teachers, students, and parents;
- The ability and willingness to travel approximately 30% of the time; and
- A bachelor's degree.

Desired Personal Qualities/Working Style of the ASD Superintendent

While no one person will possess all of the qualities below, the ideal candidate will also possess *some combination* of the following professional and personal characteristics:

- A graduate degree;
- Entrepreneurial spirit;
- Grit and tenacity;
- Flexibility;
- Ability to work across historical “boundaries” to deliver success;
- Unrelenting focus on delivering results for all students.

Reporting Relationships

The Superintendent will report directly to the TN Commissioner of Education.

Compensation

The Superintendent salary is highly competitive and a generous benefits package is included.

Ideal Start Date

Strongest consideration will be given to candidates who could lead the ASD starting in January 2011.

Application Instructions

Applications should include a current resume and a letter of interest addressed to Monisha Lozier, the Executive Recruiter who is managing this search, ***before Friday, December 10.*** Questions about the position and/or the search process should also be directed to:

Monisha Lozier

Partner and Co-Founder

Bellwether Education Partners

monisha@bellwethereducation.org

To learn more about Tennessee's Department of Education and First to the Top initiative, please visit: <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/>.